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ABSTRACT

This document offers guidance to college housing officers in implementing substance-free campus housing. The guide offers reasons for supporting the establishment of substance-free residence halls; provides evidence that such living areas benefit both students and the college; and offers suggestions for setting up and maintaining substance-free housing. One section of the report covers starting substance-free housing areas, including finding a leader, conducting a needs assessment, involving all pertinent parties, developing a proposal, anticipating questions and concerns, and picking the location. Other sections cover recruiting and screening applicants, contracts with students, selecting and training housing staff, special programming, enforcing rules, and evaluation. Four case studies are presented: two of fraternities that have become substance-free (the University of Maine and Indiana University); and two of "recovery" housing at Rutgers University (New Jersey) and Dartmouth College (New Hampshire). A resource list and list of related publications are appended. (Contains 11 endnotes.) (CH)

Preventing Alcohol-Related Problems on Campus

Substance-Free Residence Halls



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**Preventing Alcohol-Related
Problems on Campus:
Substance-Free Residence Halls**

Peter Finn
Abt Associates Inc.

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Preventing Alcohol-Related Problems on Campus: Substance Free Residence Halls

In 1989, the University of Michigan established substance-free housing to forestall legislation that would have required every publicly funded institution of higher education in the state to set up these living arrangements. Five hundred students signed up for the first year. In 1991-92, over 2,000 students signed up for 1,462 spaces. By 1994-95, 30 percent of Michigan undergraduates living on campus, or 2,400 students, were housed on substance-free floors in 15 different buildings.

In 1993, Western Washington University in Bellingham turned the first four floors of Nash Hall, a seven-story student residence, into a drug-free living area. Previously, Nash had the worst reputation for vandalism of any residence hall on campus. Vandalism rates have declined from several thousand dollars a year at Nash to \$60, while vandalism costs at the university's other halls have remained the same. Although the school's objectives in creating substance-free housing were to test the concepts that students who are of like mind could support each other in not drinking in the residence hall and that the housing arrangement could have a campuswide effect on drinking behavior, the reduction in vandalism was an unexpected additional result.

Bradford College in Massachusetts, with 550 students, began to offer substance-free housing in 1994 to an initial group of 10 students. Administrators took the step in part to provide a safe haven for students who wanted to avoid the disruptions of binge drinkers on their floor and in part as a first step in changing the entire college environment to make alcohol a less significant focus of social activity.

Introduction

This guide provides

- compelling reasons for establishing or expanding substance-free residence halls;
- evidence that substance-free living areas benefit students and colleges alike;
- guidelines for setting up substance-free residence halls or floors; and
- guidelines for maintaining and expanding them.

The practical guidance is based on the experiences of 12 colleges and universities that have implemented substance-free housing.

The guide is written primarily for directors of residential life and chief housing officers. However, alcohol and

other drug (AOD) coordinators, directors of health services and counseling divisions, coordinators of Greek life, and admissions officials will also find the publication of interest. College and university presidents will find the bulletin useful for helping to decide whether to institute substance-free living arrangements. Presidents will find it especially helpful to read the section on **Why Set Up Substance-Free Housing?** that begins on page 2.

Student drinking and other drug use is a complex problem with no easy single solution. To address the problem effectively, college administrators need to develop a comprehensive plan that includes multiple prevention approaches and attempts to change campus norms regarding the acceptability of binge drinking. Setting up and expanding substance-free living areas is one significant approach colleges can take to reduce binge drinking and to modify inappropriate drinking norms. Furthermore, as

What Does "Substance-Free" Mean?

Most schools prohibit alcohol, other drugs, and cigarettes in their substance-free living areas. However, some colleges and universities have floors or halls where illicit drugs and smoking are prohibited but drinking is not disallowed, while a few other schools permit smoking but not drinking. Colleges and universities generally do not prohibit students in alcohol-free halls from drinking elsewhere. However, several administrators reported that they prohibit students from returning to substance-free residence halls after drinking elsewhere if their behavior upon their return creates a disturbance for other students on the hall.

the text below makes clear, substance-free housing confers other important benefits on students and colleges.

Why Set Up Substance-Free Housing?

Substance-free residence halls provide important benefits to colleges and students.

1. *By establishing substance-free housing, administrators send a message to the entire campus community that many, probably most, students do not engage in binge drinking or drink at all.* Many students, including students who do not drink or who drink in moderation, think that "everyone" on campus gets drunk. Setting up substance-free housing is one way administrators can puncture this myth of universal binge drinking and thereby help nonbinge drinking students to feel that they do not have to join the drinking crowd in order to belong.
2. *Substance-free residence halls enable administrators to provide a safe haven for students who may be susceptible to peer pressure to drink and use other drugs.* A significant number of students on many—perhaps most—campuses are at increased risk of alcohol abuse because they come from families with an alcoholic member. The Counseling and

Psychological Services at the Pennsylvania State University found that 20 percent of its clients are adult children of alcoholics. In a survey of 586 students at the University of Michigan who chose to live in substance free rooms, 6 percent reported that a family member had an alcohol or other drug problem. Substance-free housing removes a major source of temptation to drink for these students. Substance-free housing also provides an opportunity for students to stop drinking and smoking. Not all students who abuse alcohol feel good about their behavior, but they may feel helpless to control it when many other hallmates are drinking to excess.

"By being able to set up an area that is more wellness conscious, we can show that our school supports a wellness norm. We hope the area will grow each year. It is one way in which we can change the whole environment of college to make alcohol a less significant focus of social activity."

—Beth Wallace, Director of Health Services,
Wofford College

3. *Prohibiting alcohol use in a residence hall can help cut the college's vandalism-related repair costs.*
 - Vandalism costs dropped from several thousand dollars a year to just \$60 at Nash Hall at Western Washington University after the residence hall went substance free, while vandalism costs at the university's other halls remained the same.
 - At Washington University in St. Louis, Rubelmann Hall, the university's first substance-free freshman residence hall, and formerly the school's most vandalized hall, became the school's least vandalized building. Not one incident of vandalism was reported during Rubelmann's first year of operation as a substance-free residence hall. Previously, Rubelmann had to be repainted, recarpeted, and refurnished every year at an estimated cost of \$15,000. Since it became substance-free in 1992, none of these repairs have been required.

- Vassar College compared the per student charges for damages to common areas in substance-free and nonsubstance-free floors in the same halls and found the following:

<u>Residence Hall</u>	<u>Substance Free</u>	<u>Not Substance Free</u>
Main	\$6.08	\$13.20
Strong (all female)	\$6.05	\$6.05
Raymond	\$3.69	\$11.08
Lathrop	\$2.66	\$8.09
Davison	\$3.62	\$3.62
Josselyn	\$24.04	\$30.53
Jewett	\$6.52	\$8.47
Noyes	\$3.15	\$7.40
Cushing	\$1.03	\$7.30

4. *Substance-free housing may increase enrollment.*

According to the director of residential life at Bradford College in Massachusetts, "Admissions likes the program because it gives them more options they can present to students that make our school seem like a more attractive to place to enroll." A woman told an administrator at another college, "I'm grateful you have substance-free housing available because my husband went to your school, so we wanted our son to go there, but we didn't want to send him to a party school."

"Students are here to do academic work; that's our mission. So offering substance-free housing is part of our effort to do whatever we can to promote academic success."

—Charlotte Burgess, Dean of Student Life,
University of Redlands

5. *By establishing substance-free residence halls, administrators can respond to widespread customer demand among students who want a quiet*

place to live. A survey of a national representative sample of 140 four-year colleges that involved 17,592 students found that 44 percent of the students were binge drinkers—that is, the men had drunk five or more drinks in a row in the past two weeks and women had drunk four or more drinks.¹ Students are increasingly expressing frustration about the "secondhand" effects of other students' binge drinking. According to a study of 720 freshmen at 13 colleges where binge drinking was prevalent, a large percentage of students who were not binge drinkers reported that binge drinking students had

- interrupted their study or sleep: **67%**
- required them to take care of a drunken student: **57%**
- insulted or humiliated them: **34%**
- made unwanted sexual advances (women only): **29%**
- damaged their property: **14%**
- pushed or hit them: **13%.²**

Among the colleges and universities contacted for this report, the percentage of undergraduate students living on

Even Dry Campuses Need Substance-Free Housing

Many colleges prohibit any student drinking in residence halls and strictly enforce the rule. Administrators at these schools may feel there is no point in establishing substance-free living areas. However, as one administrator observed, "There will be some students at these schools who drink off campus. If they return intoxicated to their residence halls, they will disrupt the lives of the other students living in the halls." By setting up residence halls that prohibit students from returning while intoxicated, colleges can avoid alcohol-related disturbances—and repair bills from student vandalism—in these halls.

Why Do Students Choose Substance-Free Housing?

- *Students offer a number of reasons for choosing substance-free housing. A survey of 586 students at the University of Michigan who chose substance-free rooms (before the school switched to substance-free halls) gave the following explanations for their selection:*
 - avoiding roommate problems associated with drinking or other drug use: 78%
 - academic issues (e.g., wanting a quiet atmosphere in which to study): 59%
 - parental influence: 26%
 - religious preference or beliefs: 22%
 - family member with alcohol or other drug problem: 6%
 - recovery from an alcohol or other drug problem: <1%.
- *A survey of 927 randomly selected undergraduates at the University of Michigan living on substance-free floors found that choosing substance-free housing was not related to whether students drank away from the hall.¹ However, many administrators and students report that while some students do party and drink away from their substance-free residence hall, they want the place where they live to be substance free and quiet. As a result, according to the dean of student life at the University of Redlands, students who drink outside their hall will still report someone on the hall who is drunk.*
- *Many students choose substance-free halls at least in part because they dislike or are allergic to cigarette smoke.*
 - A number of students at Wofford College in South Carolina who are drinkers nevertheless choose a substance-free hall because they are willing to give up drinking in their rooms just to live in a no smoking environment.*
 - When some recovering students living on a substance free floor at Ohio State University turned to cigarettes a part of the recovery process, other students were quick to challenge their behavior because a nonsmoking environment was just as important to them as a nondrinking environment.*

¹Andrea Foote, Study Report, University of Michigan Survey Regarding Alcohol and Other Drugs, unpublished report, September 13, 1993.

campus who have chosen to live in substance-free housing is 34 percent at the University of Redlands in California, 30 percent at the University of Michigan, 19 percent at Western Washington University, and 14 percent at

Vassar College in New York State. (See the figure on page 5.) During the 1994-95 academic year, 2,400 students were enrolled in substance-free housing at the University of Michigan. However, students may have

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... Four halls and one floor are smoke free.

very different reasons for wanting to live in a substance-free environment. (See the box on page 4.)

Substance-Free Housing in Perspective

Substance-free residence halls are no panacea. Establishing substance-free residence halls may reduce vandalism and create desirable living environments for many interested students. However, these buildings and corridors will have only a limited impact by themselves on underage and binge drinking. In part, their influence may be limited because these halls may attract primarily those students who are least likely to drink to excess in the first place, leaving the binge drinking students untouched in the other residence halls. In addition, students living in these halls are free to drink socially outside the building, in other halls, or in fraternity and sorority houses, as long as they do not create a disturbance when they return to their living quarters. Despite these limitations, it is likely that substance-free living areas discourage some students from getting drunk—or getting drunk as often—because the students are removed from much of the peer pressure to drink and from students who represent role models for frequent intoxication.

"People would throw up . . . and be staggering in during the middle of the night on the weekends. The bathrooms were all gross. We just wanted a quieter environment."

—Christopher Clark, student at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Starting a Substance-Free Housing Area

The following are some of the keys to setting up a successful substance-free living area:

1. Find a committed, energetic leader.
2. Conduct a needs assessment.
3. Involve all critical college divisions in the planning.
4. Develop a written proposal.

Are Other Drugs a Problem?

Most administrators interviewed for this report said that avoiding alcohol and cigarette smoke was the primary reason students chose substance-free housing. Other drugs play a negligible or nonexistent role. Administrators also report that when rule violations occur, other drugs are rarely the cause. Of 32 violations reported at the University of Michigan during the 1994-1995 academic year, none involved other drugs. In addition, according to the manager of contracts and assignments at Ohio State University, "Drug users tend to find each other and use discreetly." As a result, drug users may exist but they may not create the disturbances for nonusers that binge drinkers create, or they may be an unidentified part of the reasons behind a student's request for a change in residence hall.

5. Consider key tips for success:

- a. Anticipate resistance
- b. Start small
- c. Keep the area(s) separate
- d. Select the area(s) carefully.

Find a Leader

Search for One or Two Motivated Individuals on Campus

As with many innovations, it is often a single key individual who takes up cudgels to get it implemented. Often, these individuals initiate action on their own. But it is also possible to identify and approach individuals whose position, experience, or interests suggest that, with a little encouragement, they will take the lead. In particular, consider enlisting

- the director of health services;
- a resident adviser who lived in substance-free halls as an undergraduate;

- residential life staff who have attended, or can be encouraged to attend, workshops on substance-free housing offered periodically by their regional Association of College and University Housing Officers;
- a counselor or counseling administrator who sees the impact of campus binge drinking norms and peer pressure on the drinking behavior of the students he or she counsels; or
- students, including at least one motivated student involved in peer counseling related to alcohol and other drug abuse.

Enlist Students as the Driving Force

On several campuses, it was students who took the initiative to get substance-free living areas established. But often administrators need to provide them with encouragement and technical assistance to be effective. At Washington University, members of the local chapter of Boost Alcohol Consciousness Concerning the Health of University Students (BACCHUS) introduced the idea of substance-free housing to their school adviser. The adviser, a member of the residential life staff, broached the idea with the director, explaining that his group was having difficulty finding a satisfactory living environment. The director set up a formal meeting with the students and then arranged a series of forums, moderated by some of the BACCHUS students and open to all students on campus, to explore the concept further. The results convinced the director to provide the space.

"Make sure you start with a few students who say they would like to live in substance-free housing. The office of residence life or the counseling center will know such students. Put them together and have them come to a meeting to talk with key administrators on why they would like to have a substance-free living area."

—Jeffrey Pollard, Director of the Counseling and Health Center, Denison University

Administrators can take the lead in proposing to establish substance-free housing but then tap into the latent reser-

voir of student interest in substance-free housing to get the initiative moving.

- Tell students that this is their chance to design a special interest housing option. Encourage a small group of students to get together and present a proposal to the student residence advisory council, if such a body exists, for submission to the office of residential life.
- Conduct a needs assessment (see below) and then get together a group of students who responded positively to the assessment and encourage and assist them to push the proposal themselves and to plan the housing design. The students who do the original planning will probably become the substance-free area's first residents.

"Help students to request substance-free housing. It is powerful to be able to say to other school administrators, 'We're responding to student requests on this matter.'"

—Charlotte Burgess, Dean of Students, University of Redlands

Conduct a Needs Assessment

Finding out how many students may be interested in living in substance-free housing is important for documenting to other administrators that there is "customer demand" for the arrangement and for anticipating how much residence hall space will be needed for interested students.

- Send students a needs assessment questionnaire to see if there is enough interest to justify substance-free housing and include the information in the proposal to the school officials.
- Hold a series of "town meetings," perhaps moderated by students from BACCHUS or a similar group, to assess the level of student interest.

Involve All Pertinent Parties in the Effort

Some colleges and universities have established substance-free housing with very little participation from

school departments. Other schools have made their program a collaborative, campuswide effort. There are compelling reasons to identify and work with several campus departments in setting up and maintaining substance-free housing.

Involving every pertinent segment creates a pool of strategically placed officials who, having gained first-hand experience with the program and having developed a personal stake in seeing it succeed, are likely to take steps to preserve substance-free housing if its existence or quality is later jeopardized. When the entire effort at one university was maintained and supported by two key individuals in the housing office and one of these people was transferred, the program developed problems that were left unaddressed, including an increase in violations and the discontinuation of residence assistance training. Involving a variety of campus departments can also be important for making sure that the entire school adopts a consistent set of policies toward substance-free housing and its residents.

Clearly, housing, residential life, and health are the most important campus departments to involve in the planning and oversight of the effort. However, also consider meeting with

- the school's **security office** to explain why security officers, who might ignore an intoxicated student on regular residence halls, need to confront a student who is found drunk on a substance-free hall;
- **maintenance staff** to explain which areas are smoke free and why, and to insist that the staff respect the students' choice to live in a smoke-free environment;
- **parents** during summer orientation to discuss student drinking and substance-free living areas;
- the **alumni board** and **parent advisory board** to avoid potential resistance based on questions such as, "Why aren't *all* our residence halls substance free?" (See the discussion below on "Anticipating Resistance"); and
- the **substance abuse prevention office**, whose staff have special expertise that may benefit the effort.

"Programs that have grown out of a thorough-going collaboration among relevant divisions with a clearly articulated and disseminated philosophy behind the program are generally (and not surprisingly) the most successful."

—Alan Levy, Director of Public Affairs and Information, University Housing, University of Michigan

These campus groups can be involved in designing, planning, facilitating, or publicizing the program in a number of ways, such as by

- setting up an initial planning meeting to which every campus division that might have an interest is invited; or
- establishing an ongoing advisory board.

Involve *students* in the initiation, planning, and operation of the program.

- Involve the residence hall association, which can be a prominent organization on some campuses, so that substance-free housing is not seen by students as an administration mandate representing one more constraint on student freedom.
- Involve the initial group of interested students in choosing a name for the hall and establishing its rules (within the limits of the housing office's rules).
- Write a preliminary contract and send it to the first group of substance-free residents after they have been identified. Allow them to modify it with the understanding that they will be expected to live with whatever terms they include.

Develop a Proposal

At this point, interested administrators and students can develop a proposal for presentation to campus officials whose approval is needed to set up substance-free housing. Even if no one else's approval is needed, a proposal should be put into writing so that there is a written record of what the arrangement will entail.

"... give the organizing students as much autonomy as institutionally possible. This is a concept that could be easily tainted by 'administrative interference', and our experience is that the students will do a wonderful job if given the space and resources necessary to succeed."

—Tony Nowak, director, Office of Residential Life, Washington University

The proposal should do the following:

- a. Define substance free: *For example, will smoking be permitted? Will students be allowed to return to the hall while they are still drunk after becoming intoxicated somewhere else?*
- b. Identify which students will be invited to participate: *Should the school begin with freshmen and in subsequent years accept upperclass students, as Vassar did, or begin with upperclass students the first year and open the area to freshmen the second year, as Washington University did?*
- c. Identify the configuration: *Will the college set aside an entire building or establish one or more floors in one or more buildings?*
- d. Specify the role of residence hall advisers (RAs) and other supervisory staff, and describe the training they will receive and who will provide it: *Will residence advisers be expected to punish violators?*
- e. State clearly what behavior is a violation of the rules, what action against the student may or will result, and who will decide what action to take: *How will students who return to the area intoxicated be treated? What if they are drunk but peaceful? Will violators be moved or referred for counseling?*
- f. Outline a marketing strategy for publicizing the arrangement to new and current students: *Will notices in the housing application be the only method of recruiting students?*

A number of these issues are discussed in more detail below.

Start-up Suggestions

Administrators offer several recommendations for successful program initiation.

Anticipate Questions and Concerns

Be prepared for some officials or departments (and some parents and alumni) to protest. Administrators report the following objections were the ones most commonly raised—and suggest some persuasive rejoinders.

*"It's illegal for **any** students to be drinking or using other drugs on campus."*

There are several ways to respond to this objection:

- Point out that "While that may be the law, the reality is different, and our prevention effort has to be based on reality." Quote the data.³ Conclude by saying, "I understand the politics, but that should not stop us."
- If administrators are concerned that parents will complain and that the school will be exposed to a lawsuit, set up a meeting with the university attorney.
- Send people with objections to visit campuses that have successful substance-free housing so they can tour the floors and talk with the program director, students, and RAs living on the substance-free floors. Alternatively, present information about other successful programs.

"Not enough students will be interested."

To counter this objection

- find some students who are willing to say that they would live in substance-free housing and have them come to a meeting with the pertinent administrators to discuss why they want to live in this type of environment.
- conduct a needs assessment that documents clearly the level of student interest.

"By removing the good kids from the all the residence halls, you will leave these floors and halls at the mercy of the disruptive drinkers who remain."

In response

- see if a number of nonbinge drinking students will go on record as saying they are definitely not role models for other students and that their absence would make no difference in these other students' binge drinking behavior;
- present evidence from other colleges showing that when a school makes a hall substance free, vandalism in the other buildings does not increase; provide the names of housing officials willing to verify this fact;

- answer that the binge drinking is happening anyway—even with the nondrinking students on the floors—and ask why students who do not want to live in this environment should be penalized.

Start Small

Most administrators recommend strongly that new programs should *start small*. Indeed, the University of Redlands started with only 16 students, Bradford College with 10, Denison University in Ohio with 8, and Vassar College with 6. Start with a small group that will bond and become committed to the program, even, if necessary,

A Variety of Arrangements to Choose From

Colleges and universities have configured their substance-free areas very differently—and some have changed the configuration over the years. Among the factors that need to be considered in settling on a configuration are:

- whether to designate floors or entire buildings as substance free, or some combination of the two;
- whether to use coed residence halls, single-sex halls, or both;
- whether to have all the designated areas prohibit the same substances or just some substances (e.g., alcohol but not smoking); and
- what to do with students who request substance-free housing after all the available space has been occupied.

Some Configurations That Colleges Have Adopted

- At the University of Redlands, one floor in one hall is alcohol free (that is, smoking is allowed), four halls and one floor on another hall are smoke free (that is, drinking is not prohibited), and two halls and one floor are completely substance free. Administrators deliberately scattered the floors among several residence halls, rather than setting aside an entire residence hall as substance free, in an effort to promote a campuswide norm that drinking is not essential to college life.
- The University of Michigan deliberately designates floors in all 15 residence halls substance free, rather than setting aside entire buildings, in order to permit students to live in their choice of hall and to engage in special residence-hall specific programs (e.g., French hall).
- Vassar College found that it generated more interest in substance-free housing when it set aside one to three corridors in nine different residence halls because upperclass students become attached to the hall where they are already living and are reluctant to move to another hall.

excluding some interested students rather than run the risk of admitting noncommitted students. If a program begins large, it may fail because it is difficult to manage this type of effort well. Any big change on campus can be overwhelming and difficult to organize.

Even though a program starts small, it can always expand:

- Wofford College began with incoming freshman in 1993, extended the program to sophomores in 1994, and opened it to juniors in 1995.
- Vassar College began with 6 students, expanded in the second year to 16, and mushroomed in the third year to 240.

"Starting small was a strong recommendation received from many schools [that I talked with]. Some schools had designated too large an area initially only to have it compromised by the housing office when it did not fill up with students willing to make the commitment."

—Shirley Haberman, Health Education Administrator, University of Pittsburgh

Keep the Substance-Free Areas Separate

Administrators agree that it is essential to establish substance-free housing in a separate area segregated in some physical manner from nonsubstance-free housing. While setting aside an entire building obviously meets this need, it is possible to set aside corridors or floors in a building if the entire floor is substance free or if there is a barrier separating the substance-free area from the other areas.

Pick the Substance-Free Locations Carefully

Selecting the particular building and floors to make substance free is also an important decision. Consider choosing

- the residence hall with the worst reputation for drinking and vandalism; or
- a building in the center of the action to show that residents can be alcohol free yet still be sociable.

If demand exceeds the available space, match overflow students with each other as roommates and block them together in nonsubstance-free residence halls.

Make sure the facility can be closed: use a whole building or, if a floor, an entire floor, not just part of a floor. There needs to be a closed community with the study lounge, bathrooms—the entire environment—substance free.

—Gabrielle Lucke, Director of Health Resources, Dartmouth College

Tips For Lasting Success

There are several considerations to keep in mind to ensure that the program is successful:

1. *Explain the program clearly to students before they apply.*
2. *Consider carefully the advantages and disadvantages of providing special incentives for joining.*
3. *Require students to sign a contract to obey the rules.*
4. *Select and train resident advisors carefully.*
5. *Consider carefully whether to provide special social programs, workshops, or events.*
6. *Tailor enforcement of the rules to the individual situation, but try to rely as much as possible on peer pressure to promote adherence.*

Recruiting and Screening Applicants

Advertise the Program

Colleges and universities need to implement somewhat different strategies for recruiting students for the program's first year of operations than for subsequent years, in large measure because once a substance-free area has been established, marketing by current residents coupled with word of mouth typically plays a significant role in attracting applicants, at least among upperclass students.

The standard method of advertising the program, whether to incoming or upperclass students, is to describe the substance-free living choice in the information sent to new and returning students regarding available housing options. However, schools can also

- include in the mailing of housing options to all incoming students a letter from existing substance-free residents expressing how pleased they are with the arrangement;
- put notices in the campus newspaper;
- post fliers in bathrooms and on bulletin boards in residence halls;
- hold town meetings;
- have recruiters who participate in college fairs for recruiting high school students talk up the quiet and healthy environment of the substance-free housing areas and the sense of community they provide;
- ask RAs who are currently on substance-free floors to generate a list of interested upperclass students; and
- suggest that the students in substance-free housing hold an open house for other students to look at the living conditions.

Consider Whether to Provide Special Incentives

Administrators disagree about whether to provide students with special incentives for applying to substance-free housing. The problem is especially complex when it comes to differences in the quality of residence halls. On the one hand, if the substance-free hall or floor offers better accommodations than other living areas, some students may choose substance-free housing only to get the higher quality living conditions. On the other hand, if substance-free housing is of inferior quality, some students who would otherwise be interested in that environment may avoid requesting it.

Evidence of this problem comes from colleges where students who have been living in substance-free housing as freshmen and sophomores switch to apartments and off-campus living arrangements when they become juniors and seniors, or join the schoolwide housing lottery in hopes of landing a room in a more attractive building.

Because Bradford College lost some students who were interested in substance-free housing to its most attractive (and nonsubstance-free) building, the school decided to allow students who were accepted into this sought-after building to sign substance-free contracts with their roommates. However, administrators eventually want to create a separate substance-free area in this desirable hall.

Consider offering other incentives for students to choose substance-free housing, or highlight natural advantages of the environment:

- Allow students who chose substance-free housing to draw their room assignments weeks in advance of other students and in a much smaller and briefer event.
- If students are billed collectively for any damage to common areas, such as the TV room, laundry area, computer room, and kitchen, explain that because vandalism in the substance-free living areas is minimal, students living on these floors are dunned much less for repairs than are students living on other halls or corridors.

Have Students Sign a Contract

Most administrators agree that schools need a signed contract to ensure that students read the rules and understand what they are agreeing to do. A contract can also be useful for administrators to point to if students violate the rules.

Generally, contracts

- specify the prohibited behavior (e.g., no drinking or smoking in the hall);
- indicate that the school may remove the student from on-campus housing or the institution if he or she violates the rules; and
- specify clearly what other actions the college may take in response to a violation.

Other important clauses that schools may wish to include in the contract are presented in the box on page 13.

Michigan does not use a contract. However, the housing lease that students sign says that they have chosen a substance-free area and that, if they violate any housing

rule, the university can take action. Because students must live on campus, the University of Redlands also does not use a contract. The school cannot easily move students who violate the rules and cannot send them to live off campus. Administrators feel that a contract would give the impression that, if students violate the rules, they will be expelled, when the school can take that step only as a last resort. However, after students commit an

infraction, they must sign an agreement not to repeat the behavior. The university's associate dean of students and director of residence life notes that the student housing form makes clear to students what to expect if they choose substance-free living. However, he still feels that if students signed a contract they would have a better understanding of what to expect and would be less inclined to violate the rules.

Sample Contract Provisions

- *I agree not to have or to use alcohol in my room or in any of the common areas of Beaumont Hall. (Washington University)*
- *No smoking of any sort is permitted in the corridor, bathroom, rooms, or adjacent stairwells at any time. It is the responsibility of each resident of this corridor to enforce and inform any guests who are visiting the corridor of this policy. If your guest/friend smokes in the prohibited areas, you may jeopardize your privilege to live on the hall. (Vassar College)*
- *No noise should be heard outside your room when the door is closed. If someone asks you to lower your music, you must comply with that request. If you are asked more than twice to lower the volume of noise coming from your room, your housing on the corridor will be jeopardized. The person who voices a noise complaint must put this concern in writing. Forms are available at the front desk of your house. (Vassar College)*
- *I will, at no time, allow my guests to possess and/or consume any of the substances described while present on my floor or in my room; I will be responsible for the conduct of my guests at all times while they are present. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)*

Select and Train Housing Staff with Care

Selecting Housing Staff

Colleges and universities have little difficulty recruiting residence hall advisors for substance-free floors. Indeed, several schools report that they have more applications for these floors than they can accommodate because RAs know that they will have fewer disciplinary confrontations with students in these areas.

"Be sure to get committed housing staff—people who are as committed as the students in the hall and who feel that substance-free housing is good not only for the residents but for them, as well."

—Jeffrey Pollard, Director of the Counseling and Health Center, Denison University

In selecting staff,

- screen RAs for substance-free halls as part of the normal RA selection process but with the added element of ensuring before and during the placement interview that candidates understand what will be expected of them on this type of floor;
- ask questions to ensure that the candidates are suitable for the assignment, such as how they would react to a student found drinking on the floor or respond to a student's complaint that a roommate is smoking; and
- try to choose RAs who have already selected a substance-free lifestyle for themselves or who were residents on a substance-free floor the previous year.

Training Housing Staff

Many—perhaps most—colleges provide no special training for RAs living on substance-free floors. A study of 38 colleges and universities by Indiana University of Pennsylvania found that less than one in four schools provided specialized training related to alcohol or other drug use.

Some administrators report that, because all RAs on their campuses receive training in creating a healthy environment and dealing with substance abuse, specialized training for housing staff on substance-free floors is unnecessary. However, administrators at several other schools where there is little or no specialized training regret that they do not do more training because in many ways the success of the program depends on how well RAs deal with any infractions of the rules.

The University of Redlands provides comprehensive training both for RAs and their supervisors (residence directors) that discusses

- expectations for how students on the floor will behave;
- the judicial process for students who violate the rules;
- resources available for students who appear to have a drinking or other drug problem; and
- procedures for students to change their rooms and floors.

School officials should also meet with RAs periodically to discuss problems they may be having.

Residence Hall Adviser Responsibilities

On most campuses, RAs on substance-free floors do not do rounds to check up on whether students are breaking any rules. Alan Levy at the University of Michigan warns that if RAs are placed in a police role, "they are seen as the enforcer of an alcohol policy among their peers. As a result, they lose their relationship with students and are then less able to be peer counselors in other areas of concern to students."

Residence hall advisors do take action if they run across a violation in plain sight or when students bring them a complaint. Typically, RAs remind the offender about the

Topics Covered in RA Training at the University of Michigan

- *expectations for residents and their guests;*
- *the resident staff role related to enforcement and conflict resolution;*
- *a summary of survey data collected from residents on why they choose substance-free housing (e.g., the desire for a quiet environment);*
- *handling violations in a way that frames the problem as a community issue (e.g., keeping the floor quiet, which is why most students choose to live there) rather than as an abstinence issue (when many students may drink off the floor); and*
- *helping RAs frame their presentation to students at the beginning of the year in terms of community values and the need to move out now if they are here because their parents signed them up and they do not plan to obey the rules.*

rules, mediate the problem if it involves roommates, or bring it to the attention of a supervisor to whom they have been instructed to report violations. A more detailed discussion of how colleges handle violations is provided on pages 16 and 17.

Consider Carefully Whether To Offer Special Programming

Most of the colleges and universities contacted for this bulletin do not provide special programming for students living in substance-free areas. (See the figure on page 5.) The Indiana University of Pennsylvania survey of 38 colleges and universities found that less than half provide specialized support for residents of these floors.

"We intentionally provide no special programming because we don't want to turn the hall into a health bashing wellness police state where students feel obligated to jog and pinch body fat."

—Patricia Fabiano, Associate Director for Primary Prevention and Wellness, Western Washington University

A number of colleges report they deliberately avoid special programming because

- students campuswide receive presentations on substance abuse;
- students will rebel against any kind of mandated activity and already have so many other obligations on their time that they resent any additional assignments;
- programming adds another layer of work for staff; and
- special programming may create the impression that substance-free areas are ghettos full of uninteresting students.

Evaluation data from residents and resident staff on substance-free floors at the University of Michigan suggest that there are no unique programming needs for these students.

A contrasting view is expressed by Chris Rasmussen, a resident director at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, who argues that "Many institutions have substance-free programs in name only, without any commitment to enhancing the experience beyond minimal administrative support. I would focus on the importance of having a programmatic commitment—providing alternative social activities . . ." At his school, special support programming may include mandatory

- counseling;
- peer groups;
- floor meetings;
- retreats;
- recovery program meetings; and
- weekly issues meetings.

At the University of Massachusetts, administrators formed three support groups: a casual, open discussion/support group and two gender-specific support groups—one for men and one for women. The groups meet on a weekly basis. The open discussion and women's support groups are facilitated by the program coordinator, and the men's group is facilitated by a male graduate assistant in the alcohol education program. Administrators established the groups to "provide a specific time and structure for students in the program to meet, talk about their issues, support each other in staying alcohol and drug free, and

Ohio State Tried—and Abandoned—Required Program Attendance

Toni Greenslade, Manager of Contracts and Assignments, Residence, and Dining Halls at Ohio State, says that her school tried implementing a Wellness Environment with required attendance at programming in such areas as exercise and nutrition. Only 18 students signed up because students said they did not have time to participate in the mandatory programs in addition to all of their other school requirements. Moreover, the program was neither well-defined by staff nor reflective of the students' interests. Some students also reported that they wanted to be able to drink off the premises. The mandated programs were poorly attended even by the small number of students who were recruited. As a result, the school eliminated the wellness program for the following year and started calling the area substance-free housing. "Mandatory program attendance has hurt this program," Greenslade concluded. She adds, "There are always new administrators who are enthusiastic about the idea of mandatory program attendance without considering student interest in such programs."

work toward living a well-rounded life based on wellness and sobriety.”⁴

School administrators can take a middle ground on this issue by

- providing workshops for all halls at the institution to encourage the wellness concept campuswide but altering the presentations to residents of substance-free halls to address such issues as how to deal with friends who binge drink when away from the hall;
- requiring residence hall staff on substance-free floors to offer continuing education in an attempt to create nonpartying norms but permitting the staff themselves to decide whether to make the sessions mandatory or voluntary; or
- offering RAs on substance-free halls small amounts of money (for example, from a Fund for the Improvement of Secondary Education [FIPSE] grant) to stage special events.

Enforcing the Rules

Colleges use a variety of strategies for enforcing the no-use rules, ranging from counseling to expulsion. Whatever the sanctions, the key is to follow through and impose them, because students know immediately when the school is not serious about applying them. Some students do test the rules, but, when they find out the school will take action, they usually stop their misbehavior.

Some colleges apply a range of responses to student violations, tailoring the response to the student and the nature of the infraction. Administrators may

- meet informally with the student;
- issue a warning;
- require a work project;
- mandate counseling;
- involve the parents;
- remove the student to another hall; or
- send the student home.

After a violation at the University of Redlands, students must sign an agreement not to repeat the behavior, and, if they do repeat it, they may be forced to leave the hall—and move to one that is less attractive and where they may have fewer friends. Half of these agreements include a provision that the student will not drink away from the hall as well as in the hall.

By contrast, there is a single policy at Washington University: one strike and you’re out. Students at Bradford College are also told that if they break the rules they will be moved—and not to the most desirable housing.

“It empowers other students to see that everyone will be held accountable and asked to leave if they will not obey the rules.”

—Gabrielle Lucke, Director of Health Resources, Dartmouth College

While on most campuses RAs and other housing staff on the hall may talk with students who break the rules, issue a verbal or written warning, and write up a report, it is residence life staff or the schools’ judicial officers who actually impose the sanctions, just as they would for rule violations on any floor.

Special enforcement problems can arise in relation to cigarette smoking. At Bradford College, two incoming students during the program’s first year of operation who requested the substance-free cluster turned out to be smokers. Because the two students were in recovery, because there was a double room that could be closed off from the common living areas, and because the other students agreed to allow them to smoke in their rooms, the college decided to make an exception and allow them to smoke. However, when some students at Ohio State University who were in recovery turned to smoking as part of their recovery, other students challenged their violation of the rules and requested that they move out.

Peer Pressure

Peer pressure from other students is often effective in curbing violations. Schools can encourage residents to assert themselves in the face of misbehavior. However,

for peer pressure to work, students need to be told about the process for reporting violations and what the college's response will be to residents who assert themselves.

Some colleges require or encourage the use of peer pressure in their substance-free contract:

- Any violation of the above stated codes of behavior will result in a verbal warning from a hallmate. Recommendations can be made to the Office of Residential Life in order to remove the violator from the corridor after those being affected have tried to confront an individual in order to cease the unwanted behavior and the attempts have been unsuccessful. (Vassar College)
- I will confront those who are in violation of the Alcohol/Drug free policy in a manner that is supportive to them as well as to the community. (The Evergreen State College)

Extent of Violations

Some colleges and universities have experienced no violations, others very few, and still others only a modest number. No school has reported a serious problem with rule breaking. With 2,400 students living in substance-free housing, even the University of Michigan has had to move only one or two students a year.

Paradoxically, during the first year of the program schools can experience either no problems or extra problems with rule breakers: no problems, because the initial group of students are dedicated to keeping the area substance free, or more problems either because the rules were not made clear to students (e.g., students who are over 21 years of age think they are exempt) or because the housing office placed some drinking students on the floor (e.g., because there were not enough students interested in the substance-free environment to fill up the available rooms).

Some colleges and universities find that only as the program expands do problems arise. The University of Michigan experienced a large jump in reported violations in 1994-95. In previous years, there had been fewer than 10 per year. Housing office staff speculate that the jump in violations may reflect an increase in the number of less committed students applying for substance-free housing as the program expands and as less desirable regular

When Parents Sign the Contract

Another enforcement problem may occur when it turns out that parents signed their children's contract or pressured their children into signing it. When these students move into substance-free housing, they may feel they are under no obligation to obey the rules. When confronted with the housing contract they signed and whose terms they violated, some students at the University of Redlands have told administrators, "I didn't think you meant it; I thought that was meant for my parents, not me." Most schools require these students to move unless they agree to abide by the rules.

housing is available. The associate director of residential life at Vassar also wonders whether, with more students choosing substance-free housing, less dedicated men and women will live on the halls compared with the original core groups who started the program. Indeed, for the first time Vassar had to relocate two students in 1994-95, one for using cigarettes and one for drinking.

Evaluate the Effort

Administrators are more likely to provide long-term financial and other support for substance-free housing if staff can document positive results. Evaluation data can also suggest which elements of the effort need to be modified, expanded, or jettisoned. Administrators may be even more inclined to continue supporting a substance-free housing program if its supporters demonstrate a willingness to make these kinds of improvements.

The process of conducting an evaluation also forces staff to think systematically about what they are really trying to accomplish and whether the manner in which they have set up their substance-free living areas—or plan to implement them—will truly achieve their goals. For example, are the goals to

- meet student demand?
- reduce drinking (or cigarette smoking)?

- change campus norms about the acceptability of binge drinking?
- reduce vandalism?
- improve student academic performance?
- increase applications?
- improve the school's image?

Few programs have the resources to conduct an experimental evaluation (that is, random assignment of students to control and treatment groups) so that the impact of substance-free housing on participating students can be compared validly with changes among a group of students who are living in other residence halls. Useful evaluations can still be made, however.

For example, Vassar College mails an evaluation form to residents on substance-free floors asking for suggestions for improving the program. Some of the recommendations students have made which were implemented include the following:

- Post a copy of the contract on doors and in hallways so that if residents need to confront a violator, they can use the contract to demand accountability.
- Reword the contract to provide stiffer regulations on limiting noise, and make noise reduction an essential part of the program.
- Make sure that the contract states clearly that violators will be removed, and remove them as soon as they become a problem.
- Remove ashtrays from the corridors.

Some Fraternities Have Become Substance Free: Two Examples

An increasing number of fraternity houses are becoming substance free. In addition to the fraternities described below, other fraternities with substance-free chapters include Lambda Chi Alpha (three chapters) and Farmhouse (all of whose 32 chapters have been substance free since its founding in 1905). Fraternity chapters have gone substance free to change the negative image many people have about fraternities as "animal houses" and to reduce their legal liability, increasing insurance premiums, and

exorbitant maintenance costs due to alcohol-related accidents, rape, and vandalism.

While there are similarities between substance-free housing in residence halls and in fraternity houses, there are

Sample Evaluation Questions

Some specific questions a student survey might ask in addition to a request for how the program should be changed include:

- *How satisfied have you been with the substance-free arrangement?*
- *How satisfied are you with your ability to sleep on this floor?*
- *How satisfied are you with your ability to study on this floor?*
- *Have there been any conflicts between you and other students on the floor related to the substance-free rules?*
- *If so, were the conflicts resolved to your satisfaction?*
- *How many violations of the no-drinking (no-smoking) rule have you witnessed in the past month?*
- *Which rules have been violated?*

Smoking	Yes	No
Alcohol	Yes	No
Drug Use	Yes	No

- *Has the amount of drinking you do away from the floor gone down, increased, or stayed the same in terms of how often you drink and how much you drink on each occasion?*
- *Would you like to make any changes to the contract? If so, what changes?*

also significant differences in terms of liability and insurance, the role of alumni, and recruitment.

Sigma Chi at the University of Maine

The chapter of the Sigma Chi fraternity at the University of Maine in Orono went substance free in 1992. After the chapter house was severely trashed in 1990 at a typical weekend blowout, the national Sigma Chi fraternity placed Maine's 90-year-old chapter on two years' probation, expelled all but 12 of its 55 residents, and banned alcohol and parties. Nonetheless, according to John Moon, the house adviser, an acquaintance rape occurred in 1991 at a party held in violation of the conditions of probation that "blew the lid off everything." T. J. Sullivan of BACCHUS and GAMMA adds, "When a woman alleged that she had been raped at the chapter house during a party, the university told the group to drastically clean up its act or shut down."

As a result, Moon and other chapter alumni, who own the building, raised \$200,000 to renovate completely what was once a beautiful structure and put in place a plan to make—and keep—the chapter substance free. All the previous residents were kicked out this time, new members were told that alcohol and drugs would not be tolerated, and a residence hall adviser was installed in the house.

As of early 1995, there were already 28 members living in the house and 17 other brothers. The chapter now ranks second among fraternities on campus in grade point average and above the average for all male students. According to one member, "We often get comments from other fraternity men, sorority women, and rushees on how nice our house looks."⁵ Initially seen by members of other fraternities as book worms, the brothers at Sigma Chi are now considered "cool." In fact, according to Moon the house has become a model for other fraternities on campus, two of which have also gone substance free.

Alpha Tau Omega at Indiana University

In 1992, at the campus with largest number of fraternity and sorority members in the country, a pledge from Alpha Tau Omega was hospitalized in a coma with a blood alcohol concentration of .48 after being pressured by fraternity members to drink huge amounts of beer, wine,

and whiskey. Because this was just the most serious in a series of dangerous incidents, the university suspended the chapter from the campus, and, when the chapter refused to discipline its members, the national headquarters closed it down.

Even before the incident, the national organization had already made a decision to turn the next chapter it closed into a substance-free chapter and had already talked to the dean at Indiana University about the idea. As a result, when the dean said he would recognize the chapter within one year, not three, if it went substance free, the national headquarters was ready to act. According to Wynn Smiley, Director of Communications for the national fraternity, the university's offer to permit the chapter to reopen in one year instead of three was a strong selling point for motivating chapter alumni to accept a substance-free chapter.

Recruitment and Rules

The national fraternity expelled all the members and, after the chapter remained dormant for nine months, recruited a nucleus of 12 students who were interested in living in an orderly environment without binge drinking but with the camaraderie of close friends living together. The

Handling the Media

Reporters may ask school officials about their substance-free housing. Articles have appeared in the local press in a number of jurisdictions describing how the arrangements work and whether they appear to be successful. School officials can also make a proactive effort to get the story out to the press. The following publication provides a useful guide both for responding to press inquiries and for promoting the program in the media: Tackling Alcohol Problems on Campus: Tools for Media Advocacy. Alcohol Advocacy Resource Center/The Advocacy Institute, Washington, D.C. Available from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI), (800) 729-6686.

original 12 students then recruited additional members. Because the nucleus was careful to recruit only brothers with whom they were compatible, when the building reopened in 1994, it was filled with members who were dedicated to making it work.

Candidates for admission must sign a contract that they will not possess or use alcohol, drugs, or tobacco in the chapter house or in its parking lot or yard. Members are free to return to the building intoxicated if they act responsibly, but, according to John Gorman, the chapter president, and Wynn Smiley, members have not yet been seen drunk on the property because of the type of students recruited.

The alumni association pays for a full-time professional building manager with an office in the house. Because the manager had run the building in its presubstance-free days, he was skeptical about whether the new system would work and upset that even the old brothers who had not been troublemakers had been kicked out and not allowed to return. As a result, some alumni and the executive director of the national fraternity met with him to allay his concerns.

Enforcement and Support

According to Wynn Smiley, peer pressure, not the manager or graduate student, keeps the students from drinking or smoking on the property. When a few members were found smoking, the other brothers sat down with them and told them that they could not smoke and that if they continued they would be removed. Smiley feels that "The members have to buy into it and self-police: no one else can police the effort. If the guys want to drink, they will. We could enforce a ban on parties, but guys could sneak beer in. If we kick out offenders [rather than encourage other brothers to expel them], you'd have a revolt on your hands, and you can't be a house manager at odds with the whole house."

"The members have to buy into it: no one else can police the effort. If the guys want to drink, they will; they have to self-police."

—Wynn Smiley, Director of Communications, Alpha Tau Omega

During the first semester after the building reopened, an advisory board comprised of the dean of students, faculty members, a parent, and two former presidents from other chapters met every few weeks to provide guidance and

Alumni Support Is Essential

Most Alpha Tau Omega alumni have been supportive, providing recommendations for new members and financial contributions. Alumni have sent the names of high school students to chapter members as possible new members. Most importantly, it is alumni holding elected positions in the national organization who have supported the change. According to the president of the fraternity, "We could not have been successful without alumni support."⁶ Wynn Smiley adds that "While there will always be a faction that would like to go back to the old ways because they feel it's not a fraternity if you can't party, the alumni who are calling the shots like things the way they are now."

support. Parents have also been supportive: a Moms and Dads club has arranged two social events, purchased a weight room, helped buy a computer room, and raised money for the chapter. When the building first reopened, the chapter invited the new members' fathers to join the 90-minute initiation ceremony.

Measures of Success

The local chapter stood at 80 members as of 1995, with 70 men living in the chapter house. Members consist of roughly equal numbers of freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, and six seniors. The president of the Delta Alpha House Corporation believes that, in the highly competitive fraternity community at Indiana University, the chapter's substance-free environment has increased its ability to recruit members.⁷ According to John Gorman, "We're seen as an elite group that gets members who have told me they would not have joined another fraternity because of the drinking and the hazing."

Before reorganization, the chapter ranked near the bottom academically; for Spring 1994, it ranked third out of 32 fraternity chapters, well above the men's average on campus. According to one member, "It's the best of both worlds. I can go to parties [in other fraternities] and still live in a nice house."⁸ Other brothers have made statements such as, "The place doesn't smell like smoke," "My feet don't stick [on the spilled beer] when I walk into the bathroom," and "When I want to study, sloppy drunks aren't walking down the corridor." Said a sorority member, "It's nice coming to a party where there's not beer thrown all over you."

"Substance-free chapters may be the salvation of fraternities on campuses across the United States."

—Wynn Smiley, Director of Communications, Alpha Tau Omega

According to Wynn Smiley, "When this group succeeds, it will make it difficult for other chapters to say, 'We couldn't survive without alcohol.'"⁹ In fact, Smiley feels that "Substance-free chapters may be the salvation of fraternities on campuses across the United States. Society is getting tired of reading about fraternities with alcohol incidents; when they're substance-free, they regain their credibility. The men who benefit fraternities most don't have to rely on alcohol or regard the fraternity as nothing but partying. So we will see stronger individual fraternity chapters with these men."

In addition, Smiley notes, liability costs will drop, increasing the appeal of substance-free housing to alumni and members alike. In fact, according to John Gorman, "In the next 5 to 10 years, because of the liability issue, most fraternities will be substance free." In light of these considerations, the national fraternity board will be deciding whether to make every new chapter of Alpha Tau Omega substance free.

The Movement Expands

As if to underscore Smiley's and Gorman's predictions, Sigma Nu Fraternity is planning to make its entire system substance free within 10 years. As a first step, Sigma Nu is identifying 24 pilot chapter houses to become substance free immediately and to have all off-site functions involv-

ing alcohol (for those of age) catered by a third-party licensed, insured vendor. Sigma Nu will call for insurance premiums paid by these chapters to be reduced and for premiums of other chapters to be sharply increased. Any chapter achieving below the men's average academically will be required to become substance free, as will all chapters receiving loans from the national fraternity and any chapter that is suspended.¹⁰

Finally, the National Interfraternity Conference has begun a pilot program, called SELECT 2000, which will identify member fraternities that will work with existing, redeveloped, or new chapters to commit undergraduate members to a number of standards, the first of which is no alcohol or drugs on chapter property.¹¹

Recovery Housing Is Another Option: Two Examples

A number of colleges and universities have established substance-free living areas especially for addicted students who are in recovery. While some recovering students may find living in regular substance-free floors satisfactory, administrators who have set up recovery housing (sometimes called sober housing) observe that recovering students often prefer—and are less likely to relapse in—housing specially designed for them.

- Recovering students in regular substance-free housing may find it objectionable if they are exposed to students who return to the floor with alcohol on their breath.
- The many students in recovery who smoke may avoid substance-free halls that are smoke free because they are not able to give up their nicotine addiction.
- Students in recovery find it helpful if they are having a bad day to be able to discuss their problems with other recovering students who can understand their difficulties.

Establishing recovery housing involves many of the same features as regular substance-free housing, including a single individual to act as the catalyst for the program, addressing concerns about the concept, the importance of starting small, keeping the area physically separate, and relying as much as possible on peers to enforce the rules.

However, there are distinctive features to recovery housing, including

- the need for strict anonymity and privacy;
- unique recruitment approaches;
- special eligibility requirements;
- regular mandatory group meetings to discuss problems; and
- different enforcement policies.

These differences will become apparent in the descriptions below of recovery living areas at two colleges.

Recovery Housing at Rutgers University

There are currently 16 recovering students living together in a separate quadrangle at Rutgers University.

Catalysts to Action

Recovery housing began at Rutgers University in 1988. Lisa Laitman, the director of the Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program for Students, was counseling students who were in recovery but living with a roommate who drank. As a result, Laitman had to keep negotiating with residence life staff to move these students, usually into a single room. However, on a few occasions, students who were switched ended up with a worse roommate or a worse floor. At the same time, Laitman was running a support group for students in recovery. When she asked these students how they would feel about having a special recovery house, she was met with positive responses.

It took a year for Laitman to arrange for an area to be set up for recovering students because the university resisted the idea of publicizing the fact that it had addicted students, because *no* student was supposed to be drinking or using drugs on campus, and because there were logistical problems arranging for a single location where students who were registered at the school's individual colleges could all live.

Laitman met with her supervisor, an assistant vice president, who was receptive to the idea, and together they proposed the idea to the dean of students. Laitman provided the clinical justification for the idea by describing the experiences of the students she was counseling.

After the meeting, implementation of her proposal was expedited when three students at Rutgers suffered alcohol-related deaths—one in a fraternity hazing, one in a drunk-driving accident, and one in a pedestrian accident. Although none of these fatalities involved recovering students, the tragedies made it attractive for administrators to agree to set up recovering housing as something they could point to as evidence that they were addressing the drinking problem on campus.

Finding a Location: Logistics and Privacy

Rutgers' recovery housing is a student apartment with two units on each of two floors within a quadrangle. While not a separate structure, the unit has a separate entrance. Laitman had originally tried using an open hallway in a four-story building, but that did not work because the students in the recovery area could hear the noises of partying and the smell of beer wafting down the stairway.

"Students in recovery fear that if their condition is public, other students will stigmatize and discriminate against them. Recovering students feel their housing area will be seen as a 'drunk house.' So it's very important that recovery housing be set up in a way that guarantees their anonymity."

—Lisa Laitman, Director, Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program for Students, Rutgers University

The current area provides privacy and confidentiality. Other students in the quadrangle do not know that these students are in recovery. This anonymity is essential. Before joining recovery housing, Laitman reports, students always ask, "Who will know I'm in recovery? Will it be on my record?" Laitman has arranged for the students' housing agreement to refer only to "special interest housing," although the housing office knows where to place them because her name is on the document. She also explains to all RAs in the quadrangle that the unit is not publicized and to keep it anonymous because of the residents' fears of ostracism and disapproval. If anyone expresses interest in the unit, the RAs are told to send the person to her.

Recruitment and Rules

Most of the early residents of the sober housing area were students whom Laitman had counseled. Today, some high school students learn about the apartment from other members of local alcoholics anonymous (AA) or narcotics anonymous (NA) groups who are already living in the unit. A few of these high schoolers have applied to Rutgers specifically because it offers this option. Outside therapists and treatment programs that have become aware of the program also refer students to the program. Today, word of mouth is the principal way students learn about the housing option. Because there are more students interested in the option than Laitman can accommodate in the available space, Laitman is seeking other space to house the overflow.

Laitman and her staff interview each applicant by phone or in person. To be accepted, students have to be attending support groups and have been sober for an unspecified but significant period of time. For example, three months' sobriety would not be enough unless the student remained in outpatient care before arriving on campus and, after arriving, participated in intensive outpatient treatment. Treatment is optional, however, if students have achieved at least one year's sobriety. Attendance at 12-step meetings is mandatory. Residents may smoke cigarettes.

"Recovery housing is not a halfway house. Students must be self-sufficient and well enough advanced in their recovery so that they do not need special programming or constant adult supervision."

—Lisa Laitman, Director, Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program for Students, Rutgers University

Programming

No special programming has been developed for the residents because they do not want any additional obligations. However, Laitman does run mandatory house meetings every month at which various problems are discussed, such as responding to nonrecovering friends who ask where the students live, recovery topics, and interpersonal problems.

Laitman conducts a mandatory initial one-hour meeting with all residents on the day they move in. With food and soda, she hands out and discusses the house rules, which, she makes clear, the original group of residents wrote. Laitman tells the residents to call her if one of them relapses. While she recognizes that all of them are familiar from their self-help groups with the importance of community, sober housing goes beyond that: they have to tell her if someone relapses. (See the following page for recovery housing resident guidelines.) She explains over and over that they will not be punished if they relapse so that no one need feel guilty reporting another resident who relapses. Instead, she will provide treatment. Returning students reassure the new ones that Laitman is trustworthy on this score. Finally, Laitman also arranges for returning residents to take new ones to local Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings.

Enforcement

Students do not sign a contract; the arrangement is entirely verbal. The housing office allows Laitman to run the unit and to remove students she feels need to leave. This arrangement is also verbal, although the housing office is happy to delegate this administrative burden to Laitman.

When a resident suffers a relapse, Laitman offers the student the option of either entering treatment (or more intense treatment) or moving out. If the student is already receiving outpatient care, inpatient treatment may be required for a period of time. However, only one student relapsed in 1995; none relapsed in the previous years.

There are no staff for the apartment. The RA who is in charge of several houses, including the one in which the sober apartment is located, does not live in the apartment. However, Laitman tells the RAs that they should call her, not anyone else, if they run across a problem with one of the residents.

Recovery Housing at Dartmouth College

Recovery housing began at Dartmouth in 1988 and currently has four residents housed together in an apartment.

Catalysts to Action

The alcohol and drug counseling office at Dartmouth was aware that there were more and more students working in

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
RUTGERS

Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program for Students
Hurtado Health Center • Room 332 • 11 Bishop Place • New Brunswick • New Jersey 08903 • 908/932-7976

TO: Residents of Recovery Housing
FROM: Lisa Laitman
SUBJECT: Guidelines for 1995-1996 Academic Year

Welcome back to those of you returning and welcome to our new students. I try to keep rules and regulations in recovery housing to a minimum because I believe in your abilities combined to make things run smoothly. Here is the minimum:

1. No visitors with alcohol on their breath or who are obviously under the influence of another drug.
2. If a resident should relapse, within 24 hours the ADAPS Staff needs to be notified and help (more intensive treatment) will be offered or the resident must move out if help is refused.
3. If another resident needs help, please be a friend and try to help. If they are resistant, please ask another friend or peer leader to help you, if that doesn't work please call me or one of the other, A6APS counselors at Hurtado.
4. House Meetings
 - Mike Burke, Substance Abuse Counselor for Alcohol & Other Drug Assistance Program for Students (ADAPS) will be conducting monthly house meetings at the Cook Apartments.
 - Barbara Kachur, also an ADAPS Counselor will be conducting monthly house meetings at Douglass, Corwin House.
 - All residents are required to attend these meetings.
 - Any problems concerning attendance should be referred to Mike Burke or Barbara Kachur depending upon where you live.

Memo to Residents of Recovery Housing
Page 2

5. Students who have one year or less of recovery and non-matriculated students need to be involved in a more intensive treatment. Make an appointment with an ADAPS counselor within the first week of classes.
6. All residents must maintain full-time credits unless special circumstances have been approved by their counselor and academic dean. Residents must discuss dropping classes below full-time status with counselor before doing so.
7. Emergencies

In the event that any resident feels there is an emergency situation, the following are numbers to call for assistance:

24 Hour Number

Rutgers Police: 932-7211/932-7111

Cook Housing:

Evan Pfaff: Resident Advisor—932-1349

Larry Jaffe: Resident Counselor—932-9386

Betsy Ylagin: Asst. Coordinator—432-9363

The phone number for The Alcohol and Other Drug Assistance Program for Students is 932-7976.

The Hurtado Health Center will no longer be open 24 hours. The following are the new hours:

Monday-Friday - 8:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday - 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

recovery programs at Dartmouth and realized that it was important to provide them with increased security against the temptation to drink or use drugs.

Finding a Location

Recovery housing at Dartmouth is currently a five-bedroom, free-standing unit much like a ranch house but referred to by students and administrators alike as an apartment. Four students currently live in the apartment and six others, also in recovery, use the area as a place to socialize. There is a combination lock on the door so that the student recovery community as a whole at Dartmouth may use the apartment as a social center.

Residents are assured anonymity. Other students, and even most administrators, do not know where the apartment is located. Furthermore, because there are so many special interest halls at Dartmouth, no one would wonder why this group of students was living together.

Recruitment and Rules

Gabrielle Lucke, Director of Health Resources at Dartmouth and supervisor of recovery housing, advertises the option in a health brochure which the health services office mails to all first-year students. She also places a notice in the campus paper every term that describes the availability of recovery housing and asks, "Are you in recovery?" Some recovering students do outreach that results in applicants. Students who take a medical leave of absence because of their addiction may request sober housing when they are readmitted to the school. As at Rutgers, some students learn about the apartment from residents at Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings.

"Four students in recovery are graduating in May. Recovery housing has had a real impact for them by helping them keep their recovery and self-esteem intact."

—Gabrielle Lucke, Director of Health Resources, Dartmouth College

Students must have been sober for at least two months to live in recovery housing, but students with less time in recovery may socialize there as long as they are not on drugs at the time. At one time, past residents had veto

power over applicants; Lucke abolished that right because some existing residents were inflexible in wanting every new resident to work their recovery in the same way they did—for example, attend AA meetings two times a day.

Lucke interviews applicants personally, asking what they hope to accomplish by joining. She requires residents to work actively in a recovery program, whether in outpatient treatment or in AA or NA. Most participate in self-help groups and individual counseling. A student who relapses, whether in the apartment or off the premises, must leave.

Lucke moderates a weekly mandatory business meeting at which residents constructively challenge each other's recovery with questions such as, "I know you've been missing some classes, John. What's up?" Lucke and her husband also attend every Sunday dinner at the apartment. While she provides informal counseling to the residents, Lucke does no formal counseling in order to avoid blurring a clinical role with her administrative and social role.

Problems with Recovery Housing

Laitman and Lucke agree that problems can arise when participation in sober housing is not voluntary. On one occasion, the residence life office at Dartmouth gave a student the choice of leaving the college or joining the recovery apartment. He did not last in sober housing. Similarly, the residence life office at Rutgers asked Laitman to accept a student who had been sober only a month and had lost his regular housing when he became drunk and threatened some other students. The student, who had been forced to commute to campus, agreed to be abstinent if he could live in sober housing. However, he had a hidden agenda—avoiding living at home. More importantly, the other residents complained to Laitman that he was too aggressive. When he eventually threatened another recovering resident, Laitman made him accept inpatient treatment even though he had not relapsed.

Reflecting on these problems, Lucke says that "The biggest issue with recovery housing is deciding how students get to live there. Should counselors decide? This is something that school administrators need to work out."

Recovering students who also have a psychiatric disorder—the so-called dually diagnosed—can create major

problems for recovery housing. Laitman feels that because she may not have acted quickly enough to remove one such student who became very hostile toward the other residents, the unit developed a reputation among other recovering students as "a crazy place to live." The unit still has students with emotional disorders—they are not necessarily screened out—but they are closely monitored. One paranoid schizophrenic who lived in the apartment for three years went regularly to his NA meetings, took his medication every day—and was graduated with a good academic record.

Both Laitman and Lucke agree that, as with regular substance-free housing, it is essential to start small. That way, the person who is the catalyst for the program can remain in personal control and provide considerable personal attention. The degree of personal involvement that both Laitman and Lucke are able to devote to their respective recovery housing programs appears to be a major reason they can report that there are few management problems in recovery housing and that almost all the students remain sober and graduate.

Resources

The following individuals who were interviewed for the publication are available for telephone consultation.

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Endnotes

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